

Report Writing



University of
Southern
Queensland

What is report writing?

Report writing is a common form of writing in business, government, scientific and technical occupations. Reports are structured to communicate information clearly and succinctly. The content is usually written for a specific audience such as clients, managers, technical staff, funding committees or senior leadership within an organisation.

Types of reports

There are many different kinds of reports. They each have a particular purpose. Here are five common types of reports you may encounter:

Report Type	Purpose
Executive or Business Report	Conveys information for making business decisions
Short Form or Summary Report	Conveys information using a focused, abbreviated structure
Scientific Report	Records information for scientific documentation
Technical Report	Communicates technical information
Evaluation Report	Presents results of an evaluation

Headings, Subheadings and Numbered Sections

The type of a report suggests which structure it will follow. The structure is shown as distinct sections in the report which are signposted with a heading or subheading. Sections are often numbered to allow readers to navigate quickly around the report. When writing reports at university, the section headings and the numbering system may vary depending on the style of report and your assessment requirements. **You must check your task sheet to know exactly which sections you need.** If you can't locate any instructions, contact your lecturer for clarification.

Writing Style

Reports present information in a clear, succinct style. Writing clearly and succinctly is a skill. You can build this skill by writing several drafts of your report. Each time you edit your report, look for long sentences with complicated wording that you can simplify. Also look for strings of words you can replace with one clear word. For example, "a lot of" can be replaced by "many". Also, remember to write using language that your readers will understand. Keep the intended audience of your report in mind.

****Structure of Executive and Business Reports**

Report Section	Section Purpose
Title Page	The title page shows key identifying details e.g., the report's title, student name and number, course code, lecturer's name, and the submission date.
Letter of Transmittal	This is a brief cover letter addressed to the client or person who requested the report. The letter identifies the report's purpose, what it covers and who has authored it.
Executive Summary	This is a short overall summary of the report, communicating its purpose and scope, summarising key points and outlining the conclusions and recommendations.
Table of Contents	The table of contents lists the main headings, sub headings and page numbers. Report sections and subsections are often numbered to assist navigation.
Introduction	The introduction presents the aims of the report, its scope and limitations. It states the problem being addressed, outlines the report's approach and structure, and may outline the overall proposed solution.
Body	The body of the report presents the key details or facts of the report. It may include three subsections: method; results or findings; and discussion.
Recommendations	The recommendations based on the report's findings are presented here. Not all reports will include recommendations.
Conclusion	This section summarises the overall content of the report by briefly restating its main points. Not all reports include a conclusion.
References	The sources you have used to write your report are listed in the references section. They validate your findings by supporting them with scholarly evidence.
Appendices	Appendices include information that is useful for the reader to access or refer to but is not essential to the overall report e.g., data, tables, graphs, policy documents etc.

****Typical Structures of Other Types of Reports**

A **Summary or Short Form Report** often uses the sections Title Page, Executive Summary, Introduction, Body, Recommendations, Conclusion, References and Appendices.

A **Scientific Report** typically uses the sections Title Page, Abstract, Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, References and Appendices.

A **Technical Report** often has the sections Title Page, Abstract or Executive Summary, Introduction, Body, References and Appendices.

An **Evaluation Report** usually has the sections Title Page, Executive Summary, Introduction, Findings and Discussion, Recommendations and References.

****Please note, these structures are guides only. Check your lecturer's instructions for the exact requirements of your report.**

Further support

Contact your student learning advisors via the Support for Learning team here:

supportforlearning@unisq.edu.au

Ph: +07 4631 2372